New Federal English Proficiency Requirement for J-1 Exchange Visitors

12/22/2014

The U.S. Department of State released new regulations that will go into effect January 5, 2015.

Based on these new regulations (explained below), ISSS will require all DS-2019 applications for prospective scholars submitted January 5th and later to include one of the four English Proficiency measurements listed below.

The new regulations modified the English requirement for all J-1 exchange visitors by including the following underlined text:

A J-1 exchange visitor must have, "sufficient proficiency in the English language, as determined by an objective measurement of English language proficiency, successfully to participate in his or her program and to function on a day to day basis."

How Do J-1 Scholars Fulfill the English Proficiency Requirement at the U of M?

English language proficiency will now be measured in one of four ways for prospective J-1 Research Scholars, Professors, and Short Term Scholars:

1. **Recognized English Language Test** (taken within the last 5 years)
   These could be:
   - A. TOEFL iBT (53 minimum), or TOEFL PBT (477 minimum)
   - B. IELTS (5.5 minimum)
   - C. MELAB (64 minimum)
   - D. MN Battery Test (64 minimum)

   Applicants must submit a copy of their score(s) with the DS-2019 application materials.

2. **Diploma from English-speaking Country**
   Applicants who have completed a bachelor’s or graduate degree in residence at a recognized institution of higher learning in the United States or another country where English is the first official language within the past 10 years can fulfill the English language requirement.
   Applicants must include a copy of their diploma with the DS-2019 application materials.
3. **Proficiency Interview, performed by MELP**
These interviews will be done via Skype or telephone and a report with an overall oral proficiency rating will be sent to the hosting department. MELP will charge a fee to the department. The fee will be $75.

If a department wants to schedule a proficiency interview for their scholar, they should contact MELP at esl@umn.edu or 612-624-1503.

Departments must include a copy of the MELP report with the DS-2019 application materials.

4. **Native English Speakers are Exempt**
Applicants whose home country has English as its first official language will be exempt from the above measurements.

Applicants will indicate this directly in the English Proficiency Form or updated ISSS application (both will be found in the coming days in Section A on our J-1 Forms webpage).

With this new change, we are updating our UMN Department Request for DS-2019 (application). For those who will submit an older version of the application, you will find the new English Proficiency Form on our J-1 Forms webpage, which can accompany the older version. This new form and application will be ready to access by Jan. 5th.